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## EXPOSITORY STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### II. ABRAM

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#### ABRAM CALLED TO BE A BLESSING: GENESIS 12:1-8<sup>1</sup>

##### LITERARY SOURCES

Underlying the Book of Genesis are three literary sources, known respectively as the Jehovist, the Elohist, and the Priestly documents. The two former are written by men of prophetic spirit, interested in the moral and religious ideas which the great prophets so earnestly emphasize; the latter is written by priests, whose predominant interest is ritual. As the period covered by Genesis offers little scope for allusions to ritual, the priestly document is but meagerly represented in that book. Full advantage is taken of such opportunity as offers, notably in the recital of the institution of circumcision—Gen., chap. 17, comes entirely from this document; but it is in Exodus, Numbers, and particularly Leviticus, that the priestly writers make their greatest and most continuous contribution.

The Jehovist and Elohist documents have very much in common. From them come practically all the interesting and romantic tales in the Pentateuch. The material with which they deal comes from ancient tradition and poetry that gathered around the origin and early life of Israel, and this they use in such a way as to illustrate the divine purpose that governed Israel's national life. The Jehovist document is so called from the fact that it uses the word "Jehovah" from the very beginning as the name of Deity; the Elohist is so called because its general name for Deity is "Elohim" (that is, "God"); cf. Gen. 20:3.

We are not here concerned with the way in which these documents have been disentangled by criticism from the continuous narrative of the Pentateuch; suffice it to say that each has a clearly marked vocabulary, style, and theology of its own. The two prophetic documents stand, indeed, in these respects very close to each other, and together they form a sharp contrast to the priestly document, whose precise and formal style is usually very easy to detect. Approximately the Jehovist document comes from

<sup>1</sup> International Sunday-School Lesson for February 10, 1907.

the ninth century B. C., the Elohist from the eighth, and the priestly from the fifth. Even the earliest of them is therefore many centuries removed from the events which it records in Genesis. How very far removed, in some cases, it was, we shall see, if we remember, as is commonly held today, that Abraham belongs to the twenty-third century B. C. The exodus took place about 1200 B. C., so that even the oldest literary document is over three centuries from Moses—nearly as far from him as we are from Columbus and the discovery of America. It is plain, therefore, that in Genesis we are not reading contemporary history. The passage before us (Gen. 12:1-8) illustrates this point admirably. In vs. 6 we are told that "the Canaanite was *then* in the land." This statement implies that by the author's time they were no longer in the land, at least that they had no longer a separate existence. Now, there were Jebusites in Jerusalem as late as David's time (II Sam. 24:16), and the Canaanites were not reduced to subjection till the time of Solomon. This document then, which happens to be the Jehovist, could not be earlier than Solomon's time, and other passages distinctly imply the existence of the monarchy (cf. Gen. 36:31).

In Gen. 12:1-8 the Jehovist and the priestly documents are represented, vss. 4*b* and 5 coming from the latter, and all the rest from the former. The precise mention of the age of Abraham, the minuteness, circumstantiality, and repetition in 12:4*b*, 5, are unmistakably priestly. The real story, however, comes from the other document.

#### EXPOSITION

*The venture and reward of faith.*—Vs. 1: Abraham is represented as leaving his native land under a religious impulse, or, in the biblical way of putting it, in obedience to a divine voice. The sacrifice that the voice invites him to make is tremendous—nothing less than the giving up of country, kindred, and home. The cumulative effect of these three simple words is intense; and to an ancient man exile from home was almost as bad as death. And the land to which he is called to go is unknown and unnamed. His departure is a leap in the dark; he literally went out, not knowing whither he went. The greatness of the sacrifice and the vagueness of the goal are told to illustrate what a splendid faith was his. Vs. 2: The narrator represents Abraham as receiving the promise that he would one day become a great nation. To understand the true meaning of these and similar utterances, we must put ourselves in the place of the historian. Considering that he is about fourteen centuries from the events he is recording, we are not to regard such statements as strict and sober history, but rather as the religious *interpretation* of certain facts. The writer writes

at a time when Israel is already a great nation, blessed with numbers and prosperity; and his religious instinct impels him—not without justification—to trace this back to the ancient purpose or promise of God. Vs. 3, “I will bless them that bless thee”: The fate of nations will be determined by their attitude to Israel. In one sense this is profoundly true. But probably the primary meaning is that Israel’s God will *always* be on Israel’s side, irrespective of the rights of the case. An illustration occurs in this very chapter, where Pharaoh is plagued (vs. 17) for a crime into which he had been led by the duplicity of Abraham. If this be the meaning, then we see that the historian stands, in this respect, below the moral level of the literary prophets, who strenuously maintained that Jehovah was not bound to stand by Israel, unless she were obedient. (Am. 3:2.)

Vs. 3, “In thee shall all the families of the earth bless themselves”: The ordinary translation “be blessed” suggests a noble missionary thought—that the world receives her deepest blessing from and through Israel. But 22:18, where the Hebrew word is unambiguous, and the context in both passages, which is material (cf. 22:17) rather than spiritual, make it practically certain that the true translation here is “shall bless themselves.” The meaning will then be: Israel’s blessedness is to be so conspicuous that other nations shall use Israel’s name in invoking blessing for themselves: “May we be blessed as Israel is blessed.”

Vs. 4: So Abram made the great venture in obedience to the voice which made so terrible a demand upon him, and went out into the far unknown land.

Vs. 6: He came to Shechem in the heart of the country. When this story was written, Shechem was, and had long been, one of the seats of the Jehovah worship, just as Bethel (vs. 8) was another; and current tradition connected these and other sanctuaries with the appearances of the national God in the olden days, to the patriarchs. In reality, many of these sanctuaries must have existed as such even before the coming of Israel or her ancestors to Canaan. Bethel was probably a very ancient place of worship; and at Shechem, as we here learn, there was a sacred oak or terebinth, no doubt an oracular tree from which omens were obtained through the rustling of its leaves, or in some such way. This appears to have been the same tree as that which had been known among the Canaanites before Israel’s arrival, as the sorcerers’ tree (Judg. 9:37), and which was even then the seat of an ancient worship.

Vs. 7, “Unto thy seed *will I give* this land:” The bold venture of faith has been rewarded. In vs. 1 it is said only that God will *show* him the land; now, that he will give it to him.

## APPLICATION

Undoubtedly some customary applications of this passage are lost by strict fidelity to the historical method of interpretation; e.g., the missionary thought of vs. 3. But that method is nevertheless thoroughly constructive, and it suggests other fruitful lines of application.

a) The opening verses suggest, for example, *the divine significance of history*. The writer sees his country great and prosperous, and asks himself what it all means. He knows that the ancestors of his nation came from the east. Why? These things, he seems to say, are no accident; they are the issue of a divine purpose. He gives a religious interpretation to the past. The migration which brought Abraham and his clan to the west did not merely happen; it was divinely inspired and guided. Precisely what prompted it we do not know; the motive may even have been partly political. But, whatever it was, the voice of God spoke in it. He had a great purpose to fulfil through the descendants of this man, and this was the beginning of it. This very same lesson is taught in another form by the Elohist narrator who makes Abraham say: "God caused me to wander from my father's house" (20:13). From this point of view the insight of the historian is wonderful, and his reading of the past must ever remain very precious to all men of religious temper. An excellent parallel might be found in the coming of the Puritan fathers to America. Considering the very remarkable subsequent development of America, a religious historian would be justified in seeing in their migration westward a movement divinely inspired; and, were he to imitate the language of the Bible, he would probably put it thus, that the Lord had said to them: "Get ye out of your country, and your kindred, and your father's house unto the land that I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great."

b) Another point would be *the reward of faith*. Faith trusts the inward voice, and finds that the sequel justifies it. "A land that I will *show* thee:" At first, that is all; but when he reaches the land, he gets far more than a sight of it. It is one day to be his, or at least his descendants'. "Unto thy seed will I *give* this land:" God does not call men to a barren destiny. They may be constrained to give up much that they love—land, kindred, home; but for the loss of one land they will be compensated by the gift of some other. Perhaps in the new land the prospects do not seem bright, for the Canaanites may be there. But the Lord is there, too, and no Canaanites can thwart his purpose. His will must be done, and the man who does it willingly—who obeys, as seeing the invisible—must be, in some deep sense, triumphant.

LOT'S CHOICE: GEN. 13:1-13<sup>2</sup>

## LITERARY SOURCES

This passage is almost entirely from the Jehovist document. The phrase in vs. 10, "the garden of *Jehovah*," and in vs. 13, "sinners against *Jehovah*," make this plain. But here, as in the last passage, the priestly document is also represented. From this document come vss. 6, 11*b*, and 12. Between these two sources, there is a slight but significant difference in the reason they respectively assign for the separation of Abraham and Lot. The Jehovist, which is much the older, ascribes it very naturally to a quarrel between the herdsmen of Abraham and the herdsmen of Lot; the priestly document, on the other hand, explains it on the ground that their flocks and herds were so numerous that they could not dwell together. This difference is characteristic. Speaking generally, the earlier documents have a keener historic sense than the later; but the farther the documents are removed from the times they describe, the more ideal do those times become. In particular the priestly document exhibits a distinct tendency to idealize the patriarchs; and incidents which tend to wound later religious susceptibilities are set in another light. The passage before us is one illustration of this feature, and there are others even more cogent.

## EXPOSITION

From Egypt, to which he had gone under stress of famine, Abraham returned by stages—this is the meaning of the word rendered "on his journeys"—to Bethel, the sanctuary at which he had, before his departure, already worshiped his God (12:8). The patriarch is represented as being now a wealthy man, in accordance with the ancient religious idea that goodness is rewarded with riches. Job, too, was a man "perfect and upright, fearing God and shunning evil," and *therefore* his substance was very great (Job 1:1-3). With Abraham, the ancestor of Israel, went Lot, the ancestor of the Moabites and the Ammonites (19:27); and he, too, had flocks and herds in abundance. Then follows the priestly account of their separation. Their possessions were so extensive that they were compelled to part company. A statement like this suggests that we are dealing here—as most modern scholars suppose—with the story of clans or tribes rather than of individuals.

The older document, however, ascribes their separation simply to a quarrel between their respective herdsmen (vs. 7), and in so doing it is true to the conditions of nomadic life in which quarrels of this kind for the possession of pasture-lands, and especially wells, are common. The

<sup>2</sup> International Sunday-School Lesson for February 17, 1907.

Perizzites, who are associated with the Canaanites, were probably not another tribe or people, but simply the inhabitants of the villages, in contrast to the inhabitants of the fortified cities.

This quarrel gives the author his opportunity to show the nobility and magnanimity of Abraham (vss. 8 ff.). The patriarch is a man of peace, to whom quarreling is unseemly; and he is prepared to make a personal sacrifice, in order to preserve a worthy relation between himself and his nephew, and to prevent strife between their subordinates. So he appeals to Lot, on the score that they are brethren—that is, near relatives; suggests separation, generously offering Lot, who is the younger man, the first choice and avowing himself content to take whatever part of the land Lot cares to leave him.

The simple speech of Abraham is replete with true dignity, and throws into all the more striking contrast the conduct of the calculating Lot, as he raised those shrewd eyes of his to behold the well-watered Plain of the Jordan (vs. 10). This phrase—literally “the Circle or Oval of the Jordan”—is used to denote the Jordan valley from a point several miles north of the Dead Sea to the plain at its southern end. The writer assumes that in those distant days there was no Dead Sea; it was all one fertile and well-watered valley, watered as Egypt is watered by the Nile, and fertile and fair as the garden of Eden. Perhaps the idea was suggested in part by the fertile land about Jericho. It is a striking scene, as these two stood upon the hill of Bethel, with the gaunt and uninviting hills of Judah on the west, and the tempting Jordan valley stretching to the south.

Lot chose the tempting valley (vs. 11). In not leaving the choice to Abraham he failed in the deference due to an older man; while, in choosing the valley and “moving his tent as far as Sodom,” he showed an indifference to the moral values of life; for “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners exceedingly”—an extremely dramatic and skilful climax (vs. 13).

#### APPLICATION

1. Incidentally, this story might be held to illustrate the *perils of wealth*. The dispute between Abraham and Lot only took place because both were “very rich in cattle.” It would not perhaps, however, be in the spirit of the ancient story to make much of this point, seeing that the ancients regarded wealth as a sign of the divine favor.

2. A much more important point, and one thoroughly in keeping with the spirit of the story, is that the *ideal man is a lover of peace*. When we read between the lines, it is very easy to see that the writer admires Abraham and finds in him his ideal. The true man, he would seem to say, does not

stand upon his dignity, or urge his legitimate claims on the basis of his seniority. Rather than quarrel, he will yield, so long as no moral principle is at stake. There is a striking magnanimity about Abraham's reply. He will let Lot select whatever part he prefers; for himself, he is prepared to go either to the right hand or to the left. He loves peace; the question of prosperity he will leave to God. But the story is further undoubtedly intended to suggest that, in the long run, such a policy pays. Abraham lost nothing by being generous. In that awful day when the storm of fire swept across the cities of the plain, it did not touch the tents of Abraham, for they had not been pitched upon that deadly area. This teaching must not, of course, be interpreted too rigidly. Many a man has suffered, in worldly estate, for his magnanimity; the only sure reward of nobility is the consciousness of being noble. But it is principally the material reward that is present to the mind of the ancient story-teller; and even in this there is a relative truth.

3. The story very powerfully suggests that *in life's decisions their moral aspect must be taken into account*. As he stood upon the hill of Bethel, Lot had an eye only to his worldly advantage. He thought only of the fertility of the plain, and did not realize that, if he went there, his neighbors would be "wicked men and sinners against Jehovah exceedingly." He was destined to pay very dearly for his temporary prosperity; it ultimately cost him both his character and his property. Your shrewd man is often really a very blind man. The real things in life, the things that truly count, he never sees at all; and from him often is taken away even that which he hath. And the story of Lot further suggests that selfishness does not pay. It is not worth while to be mean. He dealt ungenerously with Abraham's generous offer, threw himself in with a corrupt society, and ended by having to flee for his life from a burning city.

#### GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAM: GEN. 15:1, 5-16<sup>3</sup>

##### LITERARY SOURCES

This section is approximately from the Jehovist document, as we learn, among other signs, from the name of the Deity, which, in vss. 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 is Jehovah. There are indications, however, that it is not quite homogeneous. For example, after the strong assertion of Abraham's faith in vs. 6, the doubt which is evidenced by vs. 8 comes somewhat as a surprise; and vs. 3, "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed," reads almost like a duplicate of vs. 2, "What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" A duplicate like this suggests the presence of the Elohist document, which perhaps appears in this chapter for the first time.

<sup>3</sup> International Sunday-School Lesson for February 24, 1907.



## EXPOSITION

"The Word of Jehovah came unto Abraham" (vs. 1). This is a phrase very frequently used of the revelation that comes to the prophets; and the implication is that Abraham is a prophet, or at least regarded as such; he is expressly so called in Gen. 20:7. Such a phrase illustrates the tendency of later generations to idealize the past. The divine voice said to him: "I am thy shield, that is, I am prepared to defend thee, defenseless and in peril as thou art; and, though thou hast given up all at my bidding, home, and land and kindred, there will be a divine recompense for the sacrifice, *thy reward shall be exceeding great.*"

But his childlessness seems to Abraham a fatal barrier to the promised blessing (vss. 2-4). His faith, however, is reinforced by a vision of the splendid star-hung sky. In the night, as he looks up to it, he receives the assurance that, despite all seeming, his descendants shall be numberless as the stars. It was a daring thing to believe—to a childless man, daring to the point of incredibility; nevertheless, *he did believe in Jehovah*, or, more simply, *he trusted*. And this simple trust was reckoned to him by God for righteousness; that is, it stamped him as the right kind of religious man—his piety was piety indeed. The tense of the Hebrew verb implies that Abraham often, regularly, or habitually trusted his God. That was the drift of his life. This exhibition of his faith was only one of many; in particular, the author was probably thinking of that other great crisis in his life when *by faith he went out, not knowing whither he went*.

Vss. 7 and 8 may, as we have seen, come from another source. The doubt is surprising, though one could hardly say impossible, after so transcendent an exhibition of faith. In any case, the passage in its present setting is impressive, and contains a profound religious truth. No sign is given to the unbelieving; but the faithful may receive one, in order that faith may be strengthened. To him that hath shall be given.

In vss. 9 and 10 the promise is represented as being definitely confirmed by a covenant, and the covenant is made and expressed in the terms of ancient sacrifice; at least the animals were those which later law, and no doubt earlier custom, prescribed for use in sacrifice. The contracting parties walked between the pieces of the slaughtered animals, pronouncing upon the one who broke the covenant some such curse as this: "May God hew the traitor in pieces as these animals have been hewn." Obviously the terms of such a covenant are not literally applicable to Jehovah; but it finely suggests the reality of the intimacy between Abraham and his God, and the sureness of the divine purpose. Fierce attempts would be made to thwart that purpose—these are symbolized by the swooping down of the

birds of prey upon the carcasses; but, though fierce, the assaults would not be fatal, for Abraham succeeded in driving the vultures away.

Vss. 12-16 elaborate and explain the point made in vs. 11; and the eerie impression created by that verse is sustained in vs. 12. The vision comes after sunset, in accordance with an ancient idea which associates the Deity with darkness; and its powerful effect upon Abraham is aptly suggested in vs. 12b. The words of the vision, in the original version, are probably contained in vs. 18; the words in vss. 13-16, which are probably later than the context, form a brief résumé of the story of Egyptian bondage and deliverance. This is to occupy four generations of a hundred years each. By that time the iniquity of the native inhabitants of Palestine would be ripe for a swift and terrible chastisement.

#### APPLICATION

The general theme of this passage is *faith—its essence, obstacles, and triumph*. Its essence can be best understood in the light of the obstacles it has to encounter and overcome. Abraham cherished high hopes of the future in his heart, but his childlessness seemed to present an insuperable obstacle to their realization. Nevertheless, "he trusted in Jehovah;" and it was this trust in the face of seemingly insuperable obstacles, this believing where he did not see, that won him the divine approval. This, then, is the essence of faith: cherishing a belief, unshaken and unshakable, in the purpose of God, once that purpose is understood. And it is precisely this faith, this simple, childlike trust, according to vs. 6, that is the essence of religion.

What a profound insight into life and religion those ancient biblical writers had! They knew well that the path of the good man lies through disappointment, and sometimes opposition—in a word, through suffering. When some great piece of work is going on, down swoop the vultures, and they do what they can to interrupt or obstruct it. Such is life; the birds of prey are never far away.

But by the man of faith the obstacles can be overcome. "The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, *but Abraham drove them away.*" This is a fine and graphic symbol of the ultimate triumph of faith and of the divine purpose. Israel might be oppressed and afflicted in a foreign land, but in the fourth generation they would "come hither again." The man who identifies himself with the divine purpose, who trusts it, loves it, lives for it, works for it and with it, is the man who, in the deepest sense, succeeds. If God be for us, who and what can be against us?

ABRAHAM PLEADING FOR SODOM: GEN. 18:16-33<sup>4</sup>

## LITERARY SOURCES

This chapter, as a whole, is from the Jehovist document (vs. 19), but there are traces that it is not quite homogeneous. According to vs. 17, the destruction of Sodom appears to be practically decided upon; according to vs. 21, the decision still hangs in the balance. The passage we have to deal with appears to be later than vss. 1-15. It is more formal and less graphic in style; it does not move with the same ease or rapidity, or exhibit the same variety, but creates the impression that the writer, and no doubt some of his contemporaries, are wrestling with a problem. Under what conditions, for example, may a wicked city be spared? Will the righteousness of a few be efficacious to save it? On the other hand, if it be destroyed, are the innocent to perish with the guilty? This is one of the points of interest in the passage, that it gives us a glimpse into contemporary discussion, and into the religious problems that were agitating the minds of men. The story of Abraham's intercession is told with some formality, yet with considerable skill. It is obvious, of course, that such a dialogue between God and a man cannot be interpreted quite literally. But this literary medium is admirably used to illustrate the character of Abraham and the character of God.

## EXPOSITION

The object of vss. 16-22 is to illustrate the uniqueness and importance of Abraham; he enjoys the singular honor of having the divine purpose directly communicated to him. Here again, as in 15:1, the implication is that Abraham is a prophet. "Jehovah does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets" (Am. 3:7); therefore he will not hide from Abraham the thing which he will do. All the more will he reveal his purposes to Abraham, as he is to occupy so unique a position in the religious history of the world. In him the foundations of the true religion are to be laid, and "all nations are to be blessed through him" (vs. 18). This blessing would be secured through the family which Abraham was destined to found and which must therefore be trained to keep the way of Jehovah, and to do right and justice. "I have known him," in vs. 19, practically means, "I have chosen him," for this purpose.

In vs. 20 the cry of Sodom is the cry concerning Sodom. The idea of God underlying vs. 21 is very primitive. To inform himself of the facts, he has to *go down* to Sodom—very different from Ps. 139, where God is worshiped as everywhere present. There is a rabbinical tradition to the

<sup>4</sup> International Sunday-School Lesson for March 3, 1907.

effect that vs. 22b originally ran: "but Jehovah stood before Abraham." If this be so, it must have been altered to our present text from motives of reverence.

Abraham intercedes for Sodom (vss. 23-33). Abraham's whole attitude throughout this intercession is one of intense reverence and humility. Throughout it he calls the Deity, not Jehovah, but Lord, and indicates thereby his sense of the divine majesty. He speaks of himself as "dust and ashes" (vs. 27); he fears the divine anger for his seeming presumption—twice he says: "Oh, let not the Lord be angry." He moves from petition to petition with a trembling sense of the greatness of his request and the awful majesty of the God whom he supplicates. And that God he feels to be at once a God of justice and of mercy; it is these two elements in the divine nature that condition and inspire the prayer. At the very beginning, Abraham dwells on the justice of God—a justice with which the destruction of the innocent would be incompatible. "That be far from thee: shall not the *judge* of all the earth *do justice*?" This translation represents the play upon the Hebrew words more adequately than the common English translation.

But more: the God to whom he prays he believes to be also a merciful God. Strict justice would demand the obliteration of so wicked a city; but, for the sake of the good men who are in it, God may be willing to pardon it; and the answers ascribed to God in the dialogue suggest that, in this belief, Abraham does not deceive himself. Notice, too, how after the first success Abraham's confidence increases. At first he lowers his original number by five, but on every subsequent occasion by ten. That there were not even ten righteous persons within the city is intended to suggest how utter was its depravity, and how thoroughly justified was its doom. The writer, however, leaves the problem which he is discussing unsolved. If there were any righteous people in it at all, what is to become of them? The question with which he starts is as relevant at the end as at the beginning: "Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? Shall not the judge of all the earth do justice?" The problem does, indeed, receive a practical solution in the sequel, and the author is of course, not obliged to go beyond his own story; but the theoretical problem still remains. That the question is raised at all, however, shows a comparatively advanced stage of religious reflection; for in more ancient times the family, the clan, the tribe, or the city was regarded as an indivisible whole. The unit was not the individual, but the community; the individual, although personally innocent, was held to be implicated in the guilt, and therefore in the doom, of the larger whole of which he formed a part. The story before us shows

that this view was beginning to be challenged as morally inadequate or unsatisfactory.

#### APPLICATION

Behind the first section (vss. 16–22) lies the idea that *God reveals his purpose to the men who trust him*. The will of God is not an external law, nor does it come to men by magical means. The power to understand it is conditioned by the desire to understand it. Any true insight into the meaning of life's providences, any profound interpretation of the world, will depend, in the last resort, on character. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; it is to them that he whispers his purposes by the way.

The narrative in vss. 22–33 suggests thoughts both about the nature (a) of God and (b) of man.

a) God has a deadly hatred of sin. A city so wicked is a blot upon his fair creation, and deserves to be swept out of the world. But the divine justice is double-edged; the impenitent sinner it will destroy, but the good man it will save. And it will not only save him, but perhaps others also for his sake. Here we get a glimpse into the vicarious power of goodness. The divine mercy is also illustrated by the readiness to pardon and spare. This is the crowning truth of the Old Testament, and the heart of the biblical message that God is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (cf. Ex. 34:6, 7). The passage further suggests that God is a hearer and answerer of prayer.

b) The ideal man, such as Abraham, will be a man of prayer, of pleading, persistent, large-hearted, intercessory prayer. This attitude of "beating God down," as someone has called it, is not to be imitated; but many other features of the prayer are worthy of all imitation—its generosity, its nobility, its earnestness, its intelligent view of God, its reverence, its humility; for before the Judge of all the earth the speaker feels himself to be but dust and ashes.